THE EXAMINED LIFE:
EXPLORE THE DEEP RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRUTH (Veritas) AND LOVE (Caritas)

The topic of this paper grew out of extended reflections on statements from two renowned historical teachers. First, Socrates’ bold counsel, “The unexamined life is not worth living,” and the second from Mohandas Gandhi, the Hindu religious philosopher, proposing his daring “List of 7 Deadly Social Sins,” to wit:

1. Wealth without Work
2. Pleasure without Conscience
3. Science without Humanity
4. Knowledge without Character
5. Politics without Principle
6. Commerce without Morality
7. Worship without Sacrifice

I would like to begin my study of the “examined life” in humbly presuming to alter slightly Gandhi’s List by adding an eighth negative trait, namely, Truth/Knowledge (veritas) without Love/Compassion (caritas). This new addition may also be read as the fusion of numbers three (‘science without humanity’) and four (‘knowledge without character’) from Gandhi’s List. Assuming this optional reading of Gandhi as foundation for Socrates’s “examined life,” my essay attempts to pursue in some depth the integral and essential relationship between the two all-pervasive affirmations of the Dominican shield, Veritas (truth or knowledge) and Caritas (love or compassion). Following an extended analysis of this relationship and some possible practical conclusions for us as a community, I will then propose a concrete example of the interplay between truth and love in the philosophies of nonviolence as preached and practiced by Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. respectively.

I. Reflections on the Relationship between Truth and Love.

1. To begin this discussion, it might be helpful first of all to note comments about this relationship from a somewhat arbitrary selection of diverse sources:

- “Charity in truth…is the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity…Through this close link with truth, love/charity can be recognized as an authentic expression of humanity and an element of fundamental importance in human relationships, including those of a public nature. Only in truth can charity shine forth, only in truth can charity be authentically lived. Truth is the light that gives meaning and value to charity…” Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate, 1, 3.
- “…This relationship is one of the most misunderstood concepts within the beliefs of man. True love is not possible without truth. The most powerful feeling in the universe, God’s love, cannot be felt without Divine Truth accompanying it. The harmony of truth and love is the science of the Universe, not just moral principles and guidelines by which we live, but also the engine room of the material Universe, and the source of


- “To love without truth means not to see others, and therefore to relate to them in a shallow way…On the other hand, to have truth but not love, means to fall prey to judgment about the limitations of others…In the end, our capacity to be truthful rests upon the strength of our desire to live life with integrity—to be ourselves as God would have us be…Julie Redstone, Love and Truth. See http://lightomega.org/Ind/Pure/Love_and_Truth.html.

- “Wisdom is knowledge (veritas) deepened by love (caritas), and the highest wisdom, contemplative wisdom, entails a love that transcends all understanding and knowledge…” Ilia Dello, The Unbearable Wholeness of Being , p. 139

- “We need to discover the link between knowledge and love, a penetrating vision of wisdom by which one knows in a way more deeply than the mind alone can grasp…” Id, 152

- “Wisdom is knowledge deepened by love and leads to greater wholeness because it knows and sees with the eyes of the heart…” Id, 182

- “If love is absent from the core of knowledge—whether on the level of science, university education or Christian faith—the end result is division, confusion, and separation. Love goes further than knowledge alone, because love is the essence of all that exists…” Ibid.

2. Some reflections on the force of these foundational virtues, love and truth in pursuit of the ‘examined life’:

- Truth and love respond respectively to the two uniquely human faculties of intellect (knowing) and will (desiring). Thus operationally, the intellect seeks after the truth (veritas) and the will embraces the good (caritas). What implications, one asks, might this have for our community of teaching and learning? My answer is summed up in Dominican adage, contemplata aliis tradere , that is, what one has learned is meant also—maybe necessarily-- to be shared with others.

- Secondly, a viable moral compass may be discovered in the deep relationship between one’s word (truth) and one’s actions/behavior/conduct (love/compassion). In other words, one might query, who is the ‘good’ person? The exemplars of virtue seem generally to be persons in whom consistently no contradiction exists between their word (‘what they say/believe’) and their deeds (‘how they act/behave’). Integrity and authenticity might well serve as valuable descriptors here.

- Finally, how much more forceful is the motto in the Dominican shield when we incorporate into our mission day-by-day the deep meaning of these WORDS, as we both proclaim them, and as we live them!!
III. GANDHI & KING: TRUTH AND LOVE:
PHILOSOPHIES OF NONVIOLENT ACTION

I. Religious philosophies of nonviolence

- Movements leading to systems
- Religious based philosophies
- “Leap-of-Faith”: Belief/Reason

II. Gandhi: Satyagraha (Truth-Force): There are three essential components:

1. **Sat** (Truth) = Goal or End
   - God is Truth/Truth is God
   - But Truth (God) exceeds knowledge
   - Thus “Experiments with Truth”
   - Emphasis on **Means** (Truth = End.)

2. **Ahimsa** (nonviolence/Love) = **Means**
   - Action based on refusal to do harm
   - Without love/ahimsa, can’t reach truth
   - Action seeking truth based on love

3. **Tapasya** = receiving (not causing) suffering
   - Self-suffering (accepting suffering)
   - Not passive (nonviolence of the weak)
   - Requires strength and fearlessness

CONCLUSIONS:

- Conflict in human affairs is inevitable
- No one has full understanding of Truth
- Nonviolence/love is the only Means
- Satyagrahi will accept, rather than cause, suffering in pursuit of truth
III. KING: Nonviolent action/resistance (based on love)

1. “Pilgrimage to Nonviolence” (Stride…)
   - Gandhi’s influence
   - (Problems with Nietzsche…)
   - Encounter with Niebuhr
   - Gandhi as Mentor

2. Essential elements in King’s Philosophy
   - Tested in the heat of Montgomery moment
   - Positive Philosophy
   - Directed at Reconciliation
   - Focused on institutions, not persons

3. Central Christian Theological Foundations
   - Self-suffering as Redemptive
   - Based on Christian Love (N. T.)

   --Love as Agape (cf. eros, philia)
   --Agape as selfless/disinterested Love
   --Love as Other-Oriented
   --Love-in-Action…not passive
   --Grounded in Faith (“the universe is on the side of justice”)

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MARTIN LUTHER KING: THEOLOGIAN OF CHRISTIAN LOVE

CONCLUSION: Relationship Between TRUTH and LOVE in these two Philosophies of Active Nonviolence